

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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JOSEPH MCGAVICK
FORMER ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TO KING COUNTY EXECUTIVE
FORMER CHAIRPERSON, WASHINGTON STATE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

INTERVIEWEE: JOSEPH MCGAVICK

INTERVIEWERS: WILLIAM LITTLE

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[00:00:00] **JOSEPH:** ...one morning when Harborview Hospital called us and told us they were having a demonstration at the construction site of Harborview Hall, which was a facility across the street from Harborview Hospital, and they wanted to know what the [King] county was going to do about it. That was Mr. Jetland. And so we met with them later in the day, because the county really wasn't directly involved yet, because that was a University [of Washington] project, actually. We were only vaguely aware of what the CCA [Central Contractors Association] was doing because it had been involved in some demonstrations shutting

down city public works projects, all which in effect didn't affect the county, and we'd just been vaguely aware of it.

The next day they shut down Harborview Hall and then they marched down to the County Administration Building and they threw a picket line around the County Administration Building, which was rather dangerous. Because the ironworkers, as you probably know, Bill, were one of the most recalcitrant of the unions and Local—I guess it was 85 or 75...

[00:01:10] **WILLIAM:** 86.

[00:01:12] **JOSEPH:** 86. They were standing up there with steel bars trying to entice Tyree and guys to come within range. Well, we became very concerned because our project site at that point wasn't fenced, neither was Harborview. And that must have been on a Friday, because over the weekend we fenced the site. And Charles O. Carroll was then the prosecuting attorney, and he came down with an official notice that said if they crossed this line, we could arrest them. And so we painted that notice with a stencil on all the walls around the building. Now, the reason for that was we were really afraid that somebody was going to get physically hurt out there. And we didn't mind the demonstration at all, but hurting somebody was another matter.

So they picketed us for a couple more days, I think, I don't remember exactly, you could tell by checking the newspaper files. And, finally we agreed to meet with them. And John Spellman met with John Chambers and I, and John Porter met with Tyree and with L.B. [Gurry?] and Ben McAdoo and Jim Takasawa [sic, Takisaki]. We met at the county court house, the old courthouse, in Spellman's office, his conference room. We discussed the issues with them as best we could. That must have been towards the end of the year, it must have been in the fall of '69. I remember that we were impressed by the morality of the issue. In our private discussions in the office, the whole issue was discussed not in the sense of jobs or economic security, but just the sense of the righteousness of it. Now, at that time, I was chairman of the State Human Rights Commission. So I called our staff in Olympia and I got the official minority head count, which I wasn't supposed to get by the way because they were doing this as a survey for EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission]. I got the official minority head count for each of the unions involved with our project. And we learned that the operating engineers had nobody—see, the operating engineers have jurisdiction in Alaska, and almost all the minorities in the operating engineers were Alaska Natives. Beyond that, we found out there were no [Black] Teamsters, there were no carpenters, there were no brick masons, which was a big craft working up on the Harborview Hall project. And as a result of that, after getting all that data together, we just decided that there really was a serious moral issue and we had to confront it. Spellman was very resolute about it.

So at that point the city [of Seattle] called, I think it was Ed Devine called, or else Walt Hundley, but I think it was Ed, and we decided that we would do joint negotiations because they were also shutting down some city projects. And Ed and Walt and John Chambers and I met one night, and we dreamed up a scheme, that we would settle with a bond. This was after intensive negotiations, so I don't want to make it sound like it was very light, cause the AGC [Associated General Contractors] was in, the contractors were in, and they were telling us that there was no way that they could solve the problem. And then we discovered that the AGC had civil rights clauses in every one of their contracts. So we decided to enforce those civil rights contracts, and since they hadn't done anything about it voluntarily, we decided we would use that as the legal bridge to affirmative action plans. So we issued a change order, which ordered them to hire one minority for every four employees by craft on the jobs. Where there was less than four craftsmen, they were to hire one minority.

[00:05:09] **WILLIAM:** Who ordered this, the county?

[00:05:10] **JOSEPH:** The county. Well, the city also, but let me go on with the story for a minute. The city agreed to do the same thing. Now, that was on a Friday also because—that must have been on a Thursday, because Friday we received an opinion from Charles O. Carroll that we had committed a most grievous illegal action by entering into that contract. And it wasn't signed by Charles O. Carroll; it was signed by James Kennedy, who was his chief deputy in the civil division, Norm Maleng's counterpart. And we knew that when it was signed by Maleng, the threat was real—I mean, when it was signed by Kennedy the threat was real, but if it wasn't signed by Carroll they weren't going to do anything about it, we knew that.

Well, I was the chairman of the Human Rights Commission, so I called up the attorney general [of Washington], Slade Gorton, who was a friend of mine, and I said, "I'm going to send these contracts down by Greyhound Bus"—this was on a Friday—"and Carroll has told us he's gonna put us in jail Monday, will you help us? Will you review these contracts and see if we have a constitutional problem?" So he put his constitutional lawyer, a guy named Phil Austin on it, and Monday morning back in the bus, we got the official amendments we needed for the contracts to make them all constitutional and legal. Then we issued those official contracts as amendments on Monday.

And the way that we got around it was by having a contract with Model Cities. And Model Cities was to supply minorities to the unions—or to the jobs, I mean, and then to unions as well, and to pay for any training that was necessary. A couple of contractors really got serious, they were very good about it. And a couple of the contractors' attorneys helped us work this arrangement so that the contractors would not suffer unduly by the process. Don Davidson, I think, was the most important guy in that process, but I'm not sure that that's his name, but that strikes what I know.

The unions—when that contract amendment was issued, the unions were lily-white. They called—well, it wasn't a general strike, but it might as well have been, because the unions ordered all of their men for check off at the union hall. And one morning about three thousand white union members came down the street chanting "We want Spellman." I will never forget that day, I suppose I won't forget that day as long as I live. And a delegation of them came up to see Spellman, and their demand was that Spellman abrogate these contracts. And Spellman said, "No way, they're made, they're final, they're not going to change. When are you guys going to do something to open your unions?" And the union guys said, "Well, if you feel that way, Spellman, why don't you come down and tell our members?" And the advice was to Spellman not to leave the office because they'd been drinking, we could see them out there with wine bottles and beer cans, and they were afraid that there was some danger out there. And then one of the local building trades union guys called us up and told us that one of the crafts had brought in a goon squad, and that if Spellman came down, he was going to get beaten up.

So with all of that knowledge in the background, Spellman still went down. And there was a truck parked right in front of the courthouse door that had gotten trapped by this crowd. And John got up and stood on top of the truck with a bull horn, and he started speaking to the crowd, telling them why he had done what he did, what his reasons were, and they'd boo every once-in-a-while. Finally he realized that they weren't listening to him, and so John said, "Well if you don't want to listen, why don't you move on?" And he put down his megaphone and got down off the truck, and he started to wade into the crowd. At that point, we didn't realize that the sheriff was smarter than we were, and the sheriff arranged for eight detectives, and they formed a flying wedge around Spellman. And two of them, Detective O'Brien and another guy, grabbed Spellman by the arms, whirled him around and took him through that courthouse door like he was a pickle, right up to the elevator, the elevator right back to his office, and they sealed off the office. They were really frightened because they had been warned about these guys being brought in by this one union.

Well, let's see... That project process of shutdown grew, we solved the county's problems. There were a lot of demonstrations, we had demonstrations out at SeaTac Airport then. After they got us settled they went to SeaTac, which was the Port of Seattle, and there we encountered a very, very serious problem. They went on the airport field, the actual landing fields, and there is an FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] rule for flight controllers that if any unauthorized people go on the airport field, they are to stop controlling airplanes. And we had at that point, something like eighteen or nineteen airplanes stacked up over at Seattle-Tacoma Airport. So it was my job then, all through this process, but particularly when it came to the Port of Seattle, to strategize with the police to allow two things: one is we wanted to find the outer bounds of what a demonstration could be, and the second thing was we wanted to always allow them an escape. That was Chuck Collins' contribution. Chuck had been in the military at the time of the Detroit riots, if you will remember those, and what happened in Detroit is they didn't leave an escape, so what they ended up doing was surrounding the entire community, and it ended up in terror. It was one of the worst demonstrations in America.

Well, Collins had been in training for crowd control, and he knew that a key role to successful crowd control was that you always have an escape mechanism available to demonstrators. So we arranged with the sheriff to have an escape, always some place that they could get out, and secondly to define very carefully when the demonstration had to stop. And it was my job to call either Takisaki or Tyree every night and tell them what the limits of that demonstration were. My line was, "You go over that limit Tyree, we're gonna crack heads, because we can't do it." And I explained to him the grave danger at the airport with the passenger safety, if the flight controllers actually stop controlling the airplanes. So Tyree respected that, it was beautiful. He would lead them right up, they'd rattle the saber, they would make a lot of noise, but they never crossed the line, and he knew how to control that. The public, of course, had no idea that he was controlling it, they thought he was just holding a demonstration, but Tyree was actually holding a very carefully staged political activity. And he followed the rules, and he knew what the escape route was, and it worked very well. We had no head cracking after that. Nobody was ever hurt, to my knowledge. As a matter of fact, do you want me to tell you my funny incident during that period?

[00:12:24] **WILLIAM:** Go ahead.

[00:12:25] **JOSEPH:** There was at one point, they were afraid that the crowd was going to go out in the field, so the sheriffs linked arms, and the sheriffs were instructed under no circumstance to engage in any kind of bodily violence. And the sheriffs linked arms, and this one Black girl who was in the crowd—Black lady I should say I guess, these days—walked up to this one sheriff and she says, "Why, I know you, you've been up to visit me at 13th and Alder." [laughs] And she stood there and taunted this guy until the sheriff got so embarrassed, all the other guys were laughing, and he had to leave the line up. It's a little humorous story. It's true.

What happened during that period was a whole effort that was really quite impressive, the pulling together of a lot of community people. There were Charles Stone of Perkins Coie Stone, a big law firm; Ed Banks; some of the ministers; some of the people from the Church Council of Greater Seattle; the editorial people at the [Seattle] Times and P-I [Post-Intelligencer], the civil rights writers, Hilda Bryant anyway. All those people were supporting this. And of course, you know what that does for a politician, Bill, it gives them some resoluteness they might not otherwise have after things go bad. The Church Council started a series of sermons from the pulpits condemning the unions and contractors for their callousness. And pretty soon it became apparent that we ended up actually in a court action secretly, with the AGC attorney helping us brief the law. We also secretly had the state attorney general for the State Human Rights Commission helping us brief the law. And Lem Howell was the public mouthpiece for the group, and they went to court, and we won the court decision.

Jim Dolliver and I went to Washington, D.C. and negotiated with the Department of Labor. Jim Dolliver's the governor's assistant.

[00:14:50] **WILLIAM:** [?Oh now you tell me?]. I didn't know [?he went down there?]. I didn't know he was in D.C.

[00:14:55] **JOSEPH:** Oh yeah, Jim Dolliver and I went to D.C. and we met with the Department of Labor.

[00:14:59] **WILLIAM:** Did you take the AGC?

[00:15:00] **JOSEPH:** [?Big Hampstead?] The AGC went with us.

[00:15:03] **WILLIAM:** Did you bring Dan Rutherford?

[00:15:05] **JOSEPH:** Yeah. He was the guy that was speaking—I shouldn't say that on tape. We went to—yeah, he and a guy named Scott from the electrical workers used to always tell us that they once hired a lot of Blacks, four hundred of them in the electrical workers union, none of them are left, and it was obvious, because they didn't do anything for them.

And we negotiated a lot. I remember once taking owners of the electrical businesses to lunch. Particularly a really neat guy who owned Selo Electric, Art Siegel, was president of Group Health Cooperatives and I happened to know him through that. And I remember he was on the apprenticeship committee for the electrical workers, and I took him to lunch and had him working on the side as an intermediary. The other thing is, we had some friends in the other unions as well as, by the way, the National Ironworkers. That is an interesting thing that might not even be known in Seattle, the National Ironworkers and the National Building Trades Council were secretly calling us and telling us to hang in there, that this was a local rebel group among the unions, and that they did not represent the National Building Trades Council or the national AFL-CIO, and that we should persist, that it would not cost labor support to do so. So we did.

Okay, let's see what else I can tell you about. I went through all the demonstrations with them.

[00:16:36] **WILLIAM:** Let's jump back to your time in D.C. when you were trying to negotiate with the Department of Labor and your experience.

[00:16:43] **JOSEPH:** Yeah, that was a shock, that was really bad. I remember that we were all angry about that, including Jim Dolliver. What they did was they sent in a guy from OFCC, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance, he was just like Jim Wilson here, the dude didn't have the authority and no power of any kind, and he sat around and listened to us sort of empathized with us, and all that jazz. But the real guy who had the authority to give the money, or to give us assistance in the Seattle Plan, which is what we were trying to negotiate, was a guy named Mac something, he was then the assistant secretary for manpower. If you call Jess [?Raymond?], he can tell you his name, but it was Mac something. He was a big blonde guy who was really powerful. At the same time, Art Fletcher was there, and that was when he was the assistant secretary of labor, he was from Seattle and he was Black. They used to use him, and they used to really make me mad. They would send him down to be the token Black negotiating this thing. And Art didn't have any power, he didn't have any money under his control. It all was over in this one guy's pocket, and he would never come to the meetings. And he finally sent his deputy assistant secretary in one day and the guy jive talked us, that's all it was. That really

was classic, really classic jive talk, that's all that it was. The guy didn't say a thing. "Oh yes, we'll take this under consideration. I want you to know that the secretary of manpower is deeply concerned about it."

Well okay, we went to court and got a court order. Judge Lindberg, whose daughter happened to teach school at the ghetto high school, or ghetto grade school, I guess. Judge Lindberg finally issued the order saying here's the ratios, and so on. And then the Department of Labor came in with some help, and they funded the Hometown Plan.

[00:18:37] **WILLIAM:** Okay, let's go back to that [inaudible] in D.C. Didn't you call [Warren] Magnuson's office and [Henry] Jackson's office?

[00:18:43] **JOSEPH:** Yeah, we met with Magnuson.

[00:18:44] **WILLIAM:** And got with the whole Washington delegation?

[00:18:47] **JOSEPH:** Well we may have—it wasn't that time, it was later. I think that John called Maggie and asked if he'd arrange a meeting with the entire delegation to explain this contract. That's right, we did do that.

[00:18:59] **WILLIAM:** But that was a time later?

[00:19:01] **JOSEPH:** That was later, that wasn't when we were negotiating directly. That was after we got frustrated with the Department of Labor. We weren't getting anywhere, and the plan wasn't—the thing is, they had funded the Philadelphia Plan, and Fletcher was going all over the country touting that for the Labor Department. All we wanted was the Seattle Plan that was similar to the Philadelphia Plan, and they wouldn't do it. So we got Maggie, who was chairman of the Appropriations Committee for the Department of Labor Subcommittee, called. We wanted him together, and we wanted the Washington delegation to understand it.

During that period of time, John Chambers and I took Tyree and Jim [Takisaki] and McAdoo over to John's hole on Vashon [Island], had a little party celebrating our first victory together, but most of that wasn't publicly, no one knew we were in any way working together on the project. We were very sympathetic to Tyree. He impressed us from the outset as being a very, very sincere fellow. We couldn't see that—Tyree might get some incidental benefit out of it, but almost all of it was altruistic. He was very clearly very, very dedicated. He felt deeply about the issue of discrimination in the trade unions, and he was right, he was absolutely right.

At that time I held a hearing of the state Human Rights Commission, then called the Board Against Discrimination, where I called in all the labor leaders. Said, "Well, now tell me your side of the story, this dispute that I am involved with during my day time," and I remember Austin St. Laurent said, "How can you possibly be unbiased?" And I said, "Well, about as possibly as you can." We had an interesting hearing, he volunteered as how he would come back with more information, and I volunteered as how I was probably in a conflict of interest situation, so I resigned from the state Human Rights Commission at that time. They didn't think I could be fair. The importance of the Human Rights Commission is that it always has the appearance of pristine fairness, that was important. So I resigned at that time, because I knew that I was on both sides of that conflict. Although I really think I could have done it. [laughs]

[00:21:25] **WILLIAM:** Did they have the minutes from that meeting, the state Human Rights hearing? That would be in May '69?

[00:21:30] **JOSEPH:** There probably are, there is an entire file of every minute of every meeting that we had with Tyree at the courthouse. There are four file folders marked “CCA” in John’s office, and I kept those files, and they’re probably now filed in the archives. But if you ask Barbara to get them, she can get them.

[00:21:49] **WILLIAM:** I already asked her.

[00:21:49] **JOSEPH:** I had every single note from every meeting we ever had, and you ought to see my notes, Bill, it’d say, “Tyree said this, Davidson said that, Rutherford said this.”

[00:22:02] **WILLIAM:** What archive is this, the state archive?

[00:22:03] **JOSEPH:** No, they’re in the county archives down at Boeing Field. You tell Barbara that there were four thick files on the Central Contractors, and everything that ever happened is in those files, because I wanted to keep a very careful record.

[00:22:16] **WILLIAM:** I want to get the governor’s files from the archives from the state.

[00:22:20] **JOSEPH:** Our files are far better, we met with the governor one day and it was funny. I still remember that, Dan called in all the big union leaders, and they were all sitting around with why they couldn't do this and why they couldn't do that, they finally got George Cavano. Cavano said, “You’ve got a guy, if he’s got a driver’s license, I don’t give a damn what color he is, he’s going to work!” And Cavano made that commitment, he said, “By God, there’ll be Blacks in my union tomorrow.” He said, “You just create the jobs, they’ll be Black.” And he meant it, and he did it. Cavano was the one man—he just got mad at this thing, he didn’t understand the discrimination. He didn't want to be involved in any discrimination. Once he understood, damn, he went to work. Teamsters were the most responsive of any of the unions in town.

The operating engineers kept saying that they wanted to work it out, they wanted to work it out, and Frank [?Polsak?] and I had worked at Boeing together before he went with the union and I went with the county. And I believed Frank, but he never could get the union together to do it. And you know, it was absurd, because you think of all the Black guys who had been in the army and worked at jobs running bulldozers and trucks and garbage, and none of these guys could qualify to work on these jobs? It’s insane, especially the heavy construction jobs, because a lot of guys come out of the army with corps experience. There’s no question if they’re qualified.

I don’t know what else you want to know. You know, there’s a lot of outgrowths. We started this hiring thing with Model Cities, we ended up spending a little more than we anticipated spending. Walt did a pretty good job setting up a program up there, we got a good recruitment thing going, eventually Central Contractors wanted total control of the thing outside of Model Cities and did. I guess that’s when they got the Hometown Plan going. We put [?Merlin?] on that committee, because we knew that he was pretty damn dedicated to civil rights, and he also appeared to be otherwise neutral, and that was a good appearance thing for us. We got Walt Hubbard on the committee.

And we ended up—by the way, at that time we passed the model—this is a thing of pride I forget about nowadays, it’s really funny how things change—but we passed the model Contract Compliance Law in the United States. And we had that sucker written four weeks before Tyree came in, and we were just refining the last steps of it. So it always looked like we were responding to Tyree, and we were way ahead of him. And we did then, we did something that I think was a model of how the county should have dealt: we hired the state Human Rights Commission to enforce the county law, so that there was no bias on our part. All the hard crunch

had to be made by the Civil Rights Commission. And they hired Walt Hubbard, who we were delighted to have hired, because he is an extremely able person. And we really began to make progress, we had a lot of minorities hired on jobs as a result of that contract compliance ordinance.

But that ordinance is, to my mind today, still the model ordinance. It really is. It was drafted after a guy named Green, some work he did. He was a Black man who headed the Michigan State Human Rights Commission, he was assassinated in 1970 in the parking lot out there, in Detroit. But he was a great man. Green had drafted this law for the state of Michigan, but we found some flaws in it, so we perfected them and put them in the county. And we had the model act for the country. For years, we would get letters from people saying, “We would like to draft an ordinance, could you send us a copy.”

Vince Hayes was then my assistant.

[00:25:57] **WILLIAM:** Yeah, that’s when you and [?Florence?] got to know each other. [?Florence?] had a lot of respect for Vince.

[00:26:07] **JOSEPH:** Oh yeah, she’d call, “You know this guy is really good, but he’s really a problem. You handle him.” I’d say, “In fact, I see Vince all the time. He works for [?IBEW?] now, up in Anchorage.”

[00:26:20] **WILLIAM:** Oh, I didn’t know he works—